



Essence of movement part 1 understanding yourself

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Following on from my first article “Utilising resources in lock down”, this next article covers movement, but again focuses on the progression of development under these difficult circumstances. Many thanks to the players who fed back from article one. Some good progress has been made and those players that are engaged will hopefully have gained a better understanding of their game. I am looking forward to more players engaging and expanding our learning potential together through these unprecedented times. Use this time wisely!!

Understanding will unlock your potential

As a young squash player growing up I was fascinated with court coverage and movement. I was constantly looking for the magic formula in order to become the quickest player on court. I was fortunate enough to play in a Welsh team with three great movers in Alex Gough, David Evans and Gavin Jones. Envious of how my teammates moved and covered the court, I constantly looked to try and emulate these players. As stated, I was looking for the magic formula; ghosting, plyometrics, sprints, weights, agility sessions and everything in between. What I failed to understand is why I wanted to get faster? How was this going to help in the following areas?

- Better ball striking
- Better accuracy
- Retrieve more balls
- Higher tempo
- Transition from defence to attack
- Greater options
- How I could affect my opponents' game with my movement
- Closing the court down
- Absorb pressure
- Increase or decrease the length of rallies

Result

Due to a lack of understanding, I did get faster, but it failed to have a positive effect on my game. To put it simply, I ran around the court like a headless chicken (albeit a quicker headless chicken), which in turn encouraged me to hit the ball harder and harder with a loss of accuracy. I lost control of my movement and neglected the positive aspects of my game.

Learn from your mistakes

I was very fortunate to have good guidance and coaches around me at the time. I feel I learnt the lesson from this period by reflecting and actively learning from others and the resources available to me at the time. I believe this period offers players the time to reflect and effect positive change in the same way. Be brave and honest and accept the failings in your game as they represent the chance to improve and bring about change in a positive way.

Use your attributes


Looking back at my former teammates who all moved well, offered me the chance to learn and adjust. All three players moved very well but all in different ways and styles which suited the attributes they possessed. Players come in all shapes and sizes, it's important you understand these attributes and form a movement style which suits your frame. This is not to say you shouldn't strive to be faster, stronger and fitter. I am a firm believer that your style of game should be suited to your movement. Below you will find a couple of examples which I feel perfectly demonstrate utilising physical attributes in line with the shape of your game. I feel these two very good contrasting styles perfectly reaffirm this belief to me.

Free game on youtube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UGm8ger98fc>

Gaultier Vs Willstrop Contrasting Movement Styles

I. Worth listening to the commentary on this highlight videos to give an insight

Gaultier is trying to nullify Willstrop with his game plan linked to his movement. In my opinion he is trying to close the court down, force Willstrop back with his line, length and width. His length allows him to control the court with his movement, holding the T very strongly, using an extended lounge of the T to keep control of the T and simply push Willstrop back. Look at how he has adapted his swing on the T to keep control of the ball. Gaultier uses very little back swing at times with almost a straight arm, coming over the ball to push the ball back with very little effort and more importantly allowing Gaultier to control the T and keep Willstrop behind him in the first two games. Very few players use this straight lob option (great example of straight lob to relieve pressure on 4.24) but it works very well for Gaultier and is adapted implicitly into his movement style. As a result of Gaultier's game plan linked to his movement, Willstrop is forced to go short from behind. This ends in a predictable outcome and Gaultier uses his natural speed and athleticism to expose Willstrop with a perfectly timed forehand crosscourt counter drop (timed 2.46 in the video). This is a great example of the understanding required to use the natural attributes that Gaultier possesses. In the end Gaultier lost this match because the fundamentals in his game went missing. His line, length and width



deteriorated, with this his control of the T was not as dominant. Even though he still possesses the same speed, athleticism and agility he failed to align this with the fundamentals of his game and paid the price. As you can see movement is simply not based on those attributes we first think about. It is about aligning all those components together to become a complete player.

Willstrop was under extreme pressure in the first two games but kept working hard and didn't give up trying to attack Gaultier and when the chance came, he used his movement linked to his racket prep to gain success. These two great examples from the video illustrate that whilst Gaultier is the more natural mover and is considerably quicker, Willstrop has his own unique strengths. One of those strengths is his ball control and deception. Without his movement I would question if those strengths would be effective. Willstrop increases his speed into the front backhand corner to effect Gaultier's movement and as a consequence sends Gaultier the wrong way with a trickle boost. It is his understanding of the game and his movement linked to his racket prep which creates this opportunity. (timed at 4.09 on the video / good slow motion replay to help with this example) . Another good example is at 5.11 - the same situation again whereby Willstrop increases his speed onto the ball and this time uses the crosscourt drop to wrong foot Gaultier. These are two great examples of using your movement linked to your racket prep to create options and effect your opponent's movement. Through his understanding and utilising his undoubted attributes Willstrop was able to overcome the more natural, quicker opponent in this match. So, as you can see speed obviously helps but it is far more important to have fluid movement which suits your attributes and more importantly is aligned to the shape of your game. Understand your attributes, link those attributes to your movement and style of play. The possibilities are endless as demonstrated in this video.

Summary

Both these players are World Class players but have contrasting attributes. They have a complete understanding of how their attributes affect their movement style. Both players have adapted movement styles to suit these attributes in line with the shape of the game which is best suited for them to succeed.



Consider the following

- Timing in your movement
- Creating good body positions to allow effective ball striking
- Speed onto the ball
- Fluid movement
- Balance on the shot
- Strength and flexibility in your movement
- Speed and agility
- Perception
- Efficiency
- Split step

Few good free online videos which will help your understanding and good prep for part 2 next week.
Utilise those resources out there


<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZNz-vZKONM> / great video giving insight into efficient movement and the benefits from the world number 1. Yes it's free!!!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fgZvv-ioMjk> / good video explaining the importance of timing onto the ball.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eljFVTgFSdQ> / Free game with two of the best movers in Squash. Contrasting styles and who couldn't learn something from this game?

Feedback to me the following

1. What attributes do you possess and how can you use these attributes to affect your movement?
2. How can better movement improve your game?
3. How can your movement affect your personal style of play?

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4. Outdoor movement session to improve your speed and agility as demonstrated by Peter Creed. Search twitter @pvdcreed for the video. Cones challenge. Send videos into Squash Wales. Cones need to be placed 5x5 racket lengths apart in a square shape.

Part 2

In part two I will be focusing on how you can use good movement with perception to turn defence into attack. I will also look at the importance of timing linked to your movement and how you want to avoid stop / start in your movement through timing and using your racket technique to flow around the court. Finally, I will explore the foundations of the game to allow good movement through ball control.

Regards Greg